

## CDC Background Information on New Smoke Free Laws and Higher Cigarette Taxes

On July 1, 2010, six states will take important steps to reduce tobacco use among their citizens and to protect the public from the devastating health effects of smoking. Hawaii, New Mexico, New York, South Carolina, and Utah will all raise excise tax rates on cigarettes, and Kansas will prohibit smoking in work sites, restaurants, and bars. Four days later, Wisconsin will join Kansas and activate its own comprehensive smoke-free law.

Higher cigarette prices and smoke-free laws are the most proven, cost-effective strategies for reducing tobacco use and preventing young people from ever starting to smoke. These steps save lives, prevent chronic diseases, and reduce health care costs. Tobacco use is still the number-one preventable cause of death and disease in the world, and even with significant progress in the United States over the past two decades, 443,000 Americans still die each year from smoking.

Higher cigarette prices are proven to decrease the number of young people who try smoking and to increase the number of smokers who try to quit. For every 10% increase in the cost of cigarettes, there is a 4% decline in cigarette consumption. New York is raising its excise tax on cigarettes by \$1.60 a pack, from \$2.75 to \$4.35—the highest tax rate in the country. South Carolina, which had the lowest excise tax in the country at \$.07 per pack before the July 1 increase, adds \$.50 to bring its tax to \$.57. Cigarette taxes also will go up in Utah, from \$.695 to \$1.695; New Mexico, from \$.91 to \$1.66; and Hawaii, from \$2.60 to \$3.00. These increases will raise the national average to \$1.44 per pack. Washington raised its cigarette tax from \$2.025 to \$3.025 earlier this year.

There are significant proven health advantages to raising cigarette prices. Not only do fewer people smoke when they have to pay more for cigarettes, but the public health benefit of raising excise taxes is significantly greater when even a small part of the added state revenue is dedicated to support comprehensive tobacco control programs, including providing cessation aids to those who can least afford them. An example is South Carolina, which recently increased its tax and dedicated \$5 million to tobacco control.

Smoke-free policies such as those going into effect in Kansas and Wisconsin are also important tools for improving the public's health. Only 100% smoke-free indoor environments protect nonsmokers from the effects of secondhand smoke exposure, including an increased risk for heart attack, which can be triggered by even limited exposure. A 2009 Institute of Medicine report found a marked decrease in hospitalizations for heart attacks following the implementation of smoke-free laws and confirmed that exposure to secondhand smoke increases nonsmokers' risks for developing heart disease. Currently, 24 states and the District of Columbia have comprehensive smoke-free laws, but more than half of Americans are still not adequately protected from secondhand smoke exposure in public places or work sites.

For more information on tobacco control programs, go to [www.cdc.gov/tobacco](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco). For help to quit smoking, call 1-800-QUIT NOW. For frequent updates on tobacco news, follow CDC's Office on Smoking and Health on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/CDCTobaccoFree](http://www.twitter.com/CDCTobaccoFree).